

AN  
ESSAY

CONCERNING

*Certainty and Infallibility:*

OR, SOME

REFLECTIONS

UPON

A PAMPHLET, titled, *The Nature and Consequences of Enthusiasm considered, in some short Remarks on the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity stated and defended.*

In a LETTER to the Author of those  
REMARKS.

By SAMUEL FANCOURT.

L O N D O N,

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any stated and defended  
on the Doctrine of the Atonement  
considered, in some few Remarks  
and Consequences of Injustice  
PAMPHLET filed, The Minutes

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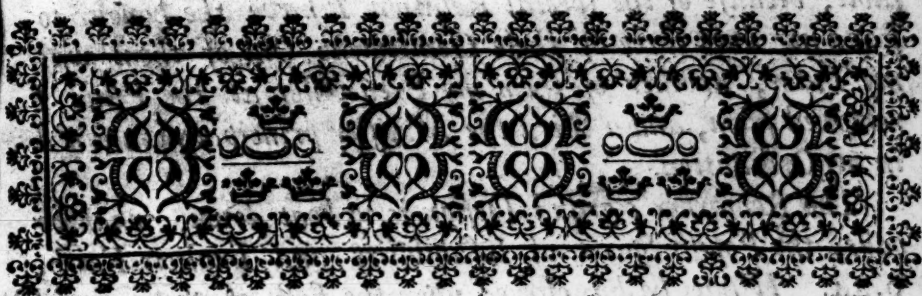
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T O T H E  
R E A D E R.

**W**HEN I had read that Pamphlet which has occasion'd the following Sheets, I was of opinion the London Ministers would scarce think it worth their while to answer it. The Author's Objections are generally so far fetch'd, and urged with so much Bitterness, they are in a great measure their own Antidote; and serve rather as a Foil, to set off the excellent Spirit and solid Reasoning, that run through the Work of his Brethren.

But when I heard what mighty things were said in praise of his Remarks, and observed the odd Construction that was put upon his Brethrens intire Silence, it fill'd me with Grief and Indignation; and at length wrought me up to a Resolution (unless some other Person should prevent me) to bestow a few Thoughts on this wonderful Performance: which would have been published sooner, had not the Interchange of several Letters, with some Socinians in these Parts, found other Work for my leisure Hours.

I presume, my meddling in the Controversy between the Remarker and his Brethren may be deem'd the more excusable, because of the special Relation I have the honour to stand in, unto three of these Gentlemen: One of them was my Tutor, another of them my Predecessor at the Place I removed from, and a third the Minister principally concern'd in my Ordination.

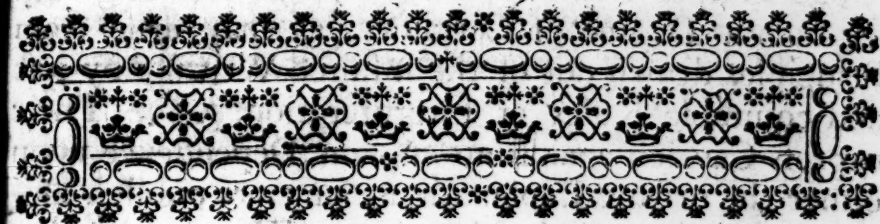
The Remarker's grand Design is to beat down, what he calls, the Popish Spirit of Infallibility and Implicit Faith, P. 44. What he has offer'd upon the first of these, you'll find examined in the following Treatise; which is chiefly taken up in an Essay concerning Certainty and Infallibility. The Subject, I confess, is somewhat dry, tho not unuseful, and to an inquisitive Mind perhaps not ungrateful. What makes it the more worthy of a Disquisition now, is the Justice it may do, both to the Character of those Gentlemen and to the Reputation of their Book, which the Author's Animadversions on this Head were artfully contrived to stab.

Should there appear a greater Tartness in any of my Reproofs, than some could wish for, I have this Apology to make; Tho the supposed Author be a Person whom I esteem and love, yet his Zeal has, in many Instances, so transported him beyond the Rules of Truth as well as Decency, he deserved (I thought) to be rebuked with a degree of Sharpness: not to mention, that the Reproofs themselves are mostly borrow'd from the Gentleman's own Pen, and apply'd (if I mistake not) with much more Justice.

You may expect, in a short time, an Examination of the other Part of his Book, under this Title, An Essay concerning Implicit Faith: unless some better Hand should undertake it, and save me that trouble.

Dec. 17. 1719.





# A LETTER to the Author of The Nature and Consequence of Enthusiasm, &c.

S I R,

HEN I had read that excellent Treatise, intitled, *The Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity stated and defended, by some London Ministers*; I could not but observe with pleasure the dispassionate Zeal and Candour, the Integrity and Wisdom, with which those worthy Gentlemen conducted themselves on this important Occasion.

*The Spirit of the two Books compared.*

Their Disclaim of any Right to external Force in Matters of Religion, p. 141. Their firm Resolution to try no other Means, but those of Argument and Persuasion, p. 3. Their Appeal to the Oracles of God, as the only Rule and Ground of Faith, p. 18. Their urging the harmonious Consent of the Reformed Churches, not as a Standard to regulate the Belief of others by, but only as a Symbol of their own, a Cloud of Witnesses; p. 14, 43. Their re-

B

nouncing



nouncing of all Pretences to an infallible Judgment about Gospel-Truth and Error, *p.* 5. pleading only for such a Degree of Certainty, as may arise from Principles drawn out of the inspired Writings by just and equitable Rules of Interpretation, *p.* 39. Their express Caution against an implicit Dependence upon either the private Explanations, or more publick Decisions of any fallible Men, *p.* 43. The moving *Pathos* with which they invite every Christian to search the Scriptures for himself, and to form his Conceptions of God from thence, *p.* 127, 128. Their not once presuming to determine the final States of any; only discovering a compassionate Sense of what they verily believe to be the Nature and Tendency of an Error, which strikes (as they think) at a Prime and Fundamental Point; *p.* 10, 141, 45. Their pious Resolution, that the Holy Scriptures shall be their constant and only Guide in speaking of this great Subject; as being fond of saying neither less nor more than what they find written there: *p.* 18. Such things as these, together with that Vein of Seriousness which runs through their whole Book, have (I find) gain'd it a Reputation, not only amongst the Friends of the Doctrine they defend, but even (in spite of Prejudice itself) amongst its very Adversaries also: And I once thought, must have dispos'd any one, had he ever so much disliked the Cause, to have treated the Authors at least, with Respect and Decency.

How little did I imagine, that a Protestant Dissenter, nay a Dissenting Minister, and one that had obtain'd a good Report amongst his Brethren, could have been so unmindful of his own Reputation, and of the Spirit of the Gospel too, (which we ought to exemplify, as well as preach) as, without any Provocation (save what the most furious Bigot in the World might plead) to attack his aged Brethren with such Contempt and Bitterness! Ministers not only of the same Denomination, but whose Piety, Wisdom

and

and Learning had so justly set them, with others, at the Head of the Dissenting Interest.

Thus rudely to treat your Seniors, is bad enough; but the false Accusations you bring against them, is that which renders the Treatment so culpable. And I'm really sorry to observe, unto what mean Artifices you can stoop, and all for a colourable Pretence to asperse them. You torture their Expressions, and would make them to confess such Meanings, as the Gentlemen themselves were so far from intending, that they have in express Terms disclaim'd them. Without any regard to the Context and Scope of what they write, you seem (for the most part) to cast in your mind, what possible Sense their Words and Phrases, taken by themselves, may bear: and then (such is your singular Candour and Ingenuity!) you generally fix upon those Acceptations, not which are most charitable and genuine, but that may best serve the Purposes of Calumny and Reproach. And, as one really conscious that the Consequences you charge upon your Brethren, were strain'd and unnatural, and therefore afraid lest your Neighbour should come and search you out; you very rarely either cite the Passage, or refer to the Page, upon which you ground your Reflections. It is by such Devices as these, that those worthy Gentlemen (like the Christians of old) are dress'd up in Bear-Skins, and under a false Disguise expos'd to the Ridicule and Rage of the People.

But, my Reverend Brethren and Fathers, be not dismay'd by reason of this great Multitude, or their Reproaches. How blessed are you, when Men do revile and persecute you, and say all manner of Evil against you falsely, in the Matters of your Lord and your God! So persecuted they the Prophets, which were before you. Need such a one as I bid you to rejoice, and to be exceeding glad? Your dear Redeemer himself has done it already. Great is your

Reward in Heaven. Men may traduce your Persons, and stain your Characters a while ; but he who is God over all, blessed for evermore, will doubtless convince them, that he honours those who honour him, whilst they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed. But to return :

You are pleased, Sir, to inform the World, you are not personally known to above five or six Ministers in and about *London*. 'Tis pity ; but labour to be content. Brighter Men than either you or I, have sometimes lived in as great Obscurity. Your Work however, tho not your Person, is long before this time known unto most of them. The extraordinary Remarks I am now examining, will (you need not fear) sufficiently spread your Fame. Tho *here*, I can't but add by the way, had your Acquaintance with Men been larger, and you been so happy as to have known these Gentlemen, it might possibly have taught you a little more Decorum, and have prevented some wanton Sallies of indecent Wit and Raillery.

*The Virulency of the Remarker's Title-Page.*

The very Title of your Book is wrote with a Pen dipt in Poison. Here your Reverend Brethren are, by the plainest Innuendo, stigmatized as a Company of Enthusiasts. And lest the courteous Reader, in tenderness to yourself, as well as to those Gentlemen, should have soften'd the Harshness of this Character by a more candid Interpretation, you tell him in the Body of your Book, That *an Enthusiast*, with you, *is one that attributes his Knowledge to a Divine Impulse*, p. 12. that *supplies the Want of an objective Evidence by an internal Witness of the Spirit*, p. 13. that *by the Heat of a mysterious Fire can believe not only without and beyond, but even contrary to all rational Evidence whatever* ; p. 15. i.e. in other words, one that in reality is mad and frantick. And then, that none might fail



fail to apply all this to your Brethren in particular, you in much kindness inscribe their Names in the Body of the Picture; crying out, (tho with what Integrity let others judge) "I wish, Gentlemen, you had not treated this Subject in such a manner, as to give the World occasion to suspect, that you come at the Knowledge and Certainty you pretend to, *only* in the Enthusiastick Way:"

P. 14.

This surprizing Account of what I thought before a sober and a rational Defence of the Blessed Trinity, made me at first to reflect upon my own Dullness, and almost to envy your penetrating Eye, that could see so much of what I, poor stupid Creature, saw nothing at all. This determin'd me to give their Treatise a second and a third Reading, and that too (if possible) with greater Exactness and Application: And after the most diligent Research, I came at length to this Conclusion; Either you Virtuoso's have intellectual Glasses, such as can magnify a Mote into a Beam, and so make those Blemishes both visible and great, which the naked Understanding is unable to perceive; or, you yourself must be heated with this mysterious Fire. But, good Sir, is there no Medium between *Clericism* and *Quakerism*? Or, must a Man of necessity be an *Anti-Trinitarian* or a *New Prophet*? I appeal to your cooler Thoughts: Have your Brethren carried Matters higher than the Orthodox have done in all Ages, if indeed so high? Must the Dead too, for many Generations past, as well as the Living, be all wounded thro the sides of these Gentlemen, as a Sect of Enthusiasts? What manner of Spirit are you of! Does it not savour of the Enthusiastick kind, or worse? There are some, I can assure you, have been ready to think, that unless your own Imagination had been *pretty much* heated with the Fire you talk of, it had scarce been possible to have broke out into such high-flown Rants  
of

of Exclamation and Censoriousness, that are almost every where to be found in your Book.

As to myself, I must needs say, nothing is more manifest, than that the Strength of your Persuasion, or rather of your Prejudice, frequently transports you *beyond all rational objective Evidence.* The magisterial Air, with which you censure the received Doctrine, without one single, much less solid Argument to confute it, may pass for a pregnant Instance of this kind.

The Sentiments of the Reformed Churches concerning the Blessed Trinity are to you, " what upon a fair Enquiry *must* in all Probability be found to be extremely doubtful *at least*, if not utterly repugnant, not only to the Nature and Reason of Things, but to the plain repeated Declarations of God in the Christian Revelation : " p. 4, 5. Really, Sir, such Flights of Assurance as this, are enough to tempt a Man, whilst he views your Picture of an Enthusiast, to pitch upon the Limner [I mean, your dear self] for the Original.

*The Remarker's Complaint of Disappointment groundless and ill-natured.*

Having fixed the Brand of Enthusiasm upon your Brethren, in the Frontispiece, you begin your Letter with a heavy Complaint of Disappointment you met with, upon reading their Performance : " I thought (say you) the *least* that could be *reasonably* expected from such a Combination of able Pens, was, to see the Question *clearly stated*, and *fairly argued*, the most *material Objections obviated*, and the whole set in a *distinct and proper Light.* But having now considered and examined what you have offered upon this Head, with all the Application and Exactness I am capable of, I *must own* " I find myself somewhat disappointed." What, disappointed of the *least* of your reasonable Expectations!

tions! And *must* you needs publickly own it too? I'm afraid there is more of Inclination than Necessity in such an ill-natured Confession. But pray, Sir, if this be the *least*, what is the *most* that a Man of your Reason could expect? Did you hope to have seen the Question *more* than clearly stated, or *more* than fairly argued? to have seen the *most* trifling, as well as the *most* material Objections obviated? and to have had the whole set in *more* than a distinct and proper Light? What pity is it, that the World is not apprized of the *utmost*, as well as the least of your modest Expectations, that even those may be answered, if possible, by such who hereafter write in this Controversy; and we may hear no more of such peevish Complaints.

*The serious and plain Christian, to whom your Brethren appeal, and for whose sake only this Book (as you yourself observe, p. 4.) was written; will, I'm persuaded, find no just Cause to complain, either of Obscurity in the Stating, or of Sophistry in the Proof of that important Point. The most material Objections against the Trinity, in some Mens Opinion, are those metaphysical Niceties, with which the Schoolmen have perplexed and darkned this Subject. But whether a proper Reply unto such kind of Objections, would have been much for the Edification of the plain Christian, is greatly to be doubted. Have they not acted a much fairer, as well as a wiser Part, in leaving every Opponent to chuse out his own Objections, such as to him shall seem most material, and to set them in the strongest Light he can? It is enough that your Brethren profess themselves ready, earnestly to contend for the Truth, they have asserted, against all Opposers; p. 18.*

*Sincerity and Truth (and not Sincerity without Truth)  
the genuine Basis of Christianity.*

Your next Complaint is about Principles and Conclusions, as also about the mighty Weight those  
Gentlemen



Gentlemen have laid upon them. Such, I find, is either the Capacity or the Narrowness, such the Penetration or the Prejudice of your Understanding, "that you cannot (it seems) at all satisfy it concerning the Truth of some general Principles they have laid down; or of the Conclusions they have drawn from them." And would the Reader but lay aside his Reason, and believe your bare Say-so, he might easily persuade himself that these unhappy Gentlemen "have laid the great Strefs of Christianity, the Peace of Mens Consciences, and the Salvation of Souls, upon a mere precarious Foundation."

*No doubt but you are the People, and Wisdom shall die with you. But others have Understanding as well as you, and are not inferior to you; as Job answered his captious and censorious Brethren. Good Sir, what is the Foundation upon which these Gentlemen would lay the great Strefs you talk of? Is it not Sincerity and Truth? If Sincerity, without Truth, be itself sufficient to support such a Weight; might not a Man upon this Principle renounce Christianity, and worship the Hosts of Heaven, if not the Devil too, and yet have a rational Confidence towards God, had he but the good luck to be sincere in this his Renunciation and Worship? Might he not be a blasphemous Jew, a deluded Mahometan, a blind Infidel, or what you please? nay, might he not be without the Knowledge of the true God in the World, and yet not without Hope, if he be but what he is, in the Integrity of his Heart? Though these be some of the natural Consequences of that dangerous Principle, yet "you (it seems) for your part do even long for that time, which you hope is not far off, when Sincerity on the one hand, and the absolute Necessity of being actually in the right on the other, shall remain as the only distinguishing Principles of Papists and Protestants:"*

i. e. I suppose, you not only wish for, but think you see the *Dawn* of such a *glorious Day*, when none but a Papist shall maintain, That there is *any one Truth* in the *whole Gospel indispensibly* necessary by the Covenant of Grace, to be believed in order to Salvation ; a *Time* that would bring us back into the *very Dregs* of *Paganism* !

*The Remarker's Charge against his Brethren, as if they damned all who will not come into their Scheme, false, if not malicious.*

The damnatory Sentence which, you pretend, they pass upon every one that differs from them, is another Grievance you complain of. You tell your Brethren, " That they have pinn'd down Christians, under the Penalty of eternal Damnation, &c. to the Belief of their Doctrine ; p. 4. That they damn all that will not come into their Scheme, or join with them in the same Jingle of unintelligible Sounds ; p. 41." Now this is such a wilful Injury to the Work and Character of those worthy Gentlemen, that (if I might reprove you in your own words) *I stand amazed, and blush for you, that you are not ashamed of it yourself ; p. 36.* Nothing was farther from their Thoughts, than to sit as Judges upon others, and to fix their eternal States. Their Innocency as to this Charge, had it been wrote with a Sun-Beam, could not have well been clearer, unto any that have read the tenth Page of their Introduction ; where we have these words : " If he [my zealous Friend] should pass a Sentence of Condemnation upon me, I shall have reason to conclude he has transgressed the Bounds of his Commission ; since nothing is more certain, than that every Man's Judgment is from the Lord, and to his own Master he must stand or fall. And how far, and in what Cases, the infinite Mercy of God may interpose, and prevent those pernicious Effects, which such an Error  
C " deserves,

“deserves, and would naturally produce, if left unto  
 “itself, are Secrets only known to God, the Judge  
 “of all, who is the wise and sovereign Disposer of  
 “his own Grace.”

Oh, Sir, ought such a Paragraph as this to have  
 been industriously concealed from the Reader? Is  
 this to be as *tender as possible of charging them with any  
 thing, of which they are not plainly guilty?* “If ever  
 (to borrow another Reproof from your own Pen)  
 “you intend more upon any future Occasion to hold  
 “up your head amongst Protestants in defence of  
 “Sincerity, you ought publicly to recant; and to  
 “beg pardon of God, of the World, and of those  
 “Gentlemen, for this scandalous part of your Per-  
 “formance; p. 36, 37.”

All that you can fairly charge upon your Brethren,  
 I take to be only these two things: (1.) They hold  
 that according to the Gospel-Covenant there are  
*some Truths necessary to be believed, in order to Sal-*  
*vation.* And are they singular herein? Don't you  
 yourself at other times in effect assert the same thing?  
 As when you say, “you depend upon the effectual  
 “Aid and Assistance of the Holy Spirit to lead you  
 “into all *necessary* Truth, p. 43. And to the same  
 purpose, p. 13. And indeed to say otherwise, is it  
 not to make the Prophet to *speak wickedly for God, and*  
*to talk deceitfully for the Most High?* when he repre-  
 sents the Holy-One of Israel, as saying, *My People*  
*are destroy'd for lack of Knowledge: because thou hast re-*  
*jected Knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be*  
*no Priest to me.* Hof. iv. 6. And is it not to treat our  
 Blessed Redeemer himself as an Impostor, for telling  
 his Disciples, *He that believeth not the Son, shall not see*  
*Life; but the Wrath of God abideth on him?* John iii. 36.  
 (2.) They hold also, that those who believe any  
 Doctrine to be both true and necessary, *may be allowed*  
*to tell others what they do believe of the Truth and Impor-*  
*tance of it:* p. 9. And therefore being, upon an im-  
 partial



partial Inquiry, verily persuaded, that the proper Godhead of our Saviour is of that Rank and Number, they think they have a Right themselves to express their compassionate Sense of the opposite Error.

So that not the *least*, as you would insinuate, but the *most* which they contend for, is this; *They who deny the Lord that bought them*, have not (as they can find) any Right by the Gospel-Standard *unto the Covenant-Mercies there*. “But (as has been observed) how far and in what Cases the infinite Mercy of God may interpose, &c. are (with them) Secrets only known to God, the Judge of all.”

After these more general Reflections (which serve for an Introduction) you at length descend unto Particulars.

*The Remarker's Criticism upon their Title-Page forc'd and impertinent.*

And first you try your Skill in Criticism upon their Title-Page. “By the *Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity stated and defended*, you shrewdly presume, they mean only their own Judgment or Opinion stated and defended, concerning the Sense of Scripture, as it relates unto the Doctrine of the Trinity, &c.” p. 5.

What a super-critical Remark is here! If the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, without the Epithet of [Scripture] be a Title too assuming for your Brethren, I do but think how unmercifully you would have rally'd these unhappy Gentlemen, had they presumed to have copy'd after a certain Doctor, and intitled their Treatise, *The Scripture-Doctrine*, &c?

Here, was a Man disposed to turn Pedlar, and to commence Critick of small Wares, how easily might he pelt the Champion of your Cause with the well-turn'd Periods of this flowing Paragraph, and with a better Grace say, “By the *Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity*, &c. I presume, Doctor, you mean

“ only your Judgment or Opinion concerning the  
 “ Sense of Scripture, as it relates to the Doctrine  
 “ of the Trinity ? ” And then add with you,  
 “ I have, as I imagine, sufficient reason to take this  
 “ for granted ; since it is certain, that as a Pro-  
 “ testant, or even as a fallible Creature, you can  
 “ mean nothing else by it. But whether you mean  
 “ so or no, I think it will be the more necessa-  
 “ ry to distinguish betwixt your Opinion or Sense  
 “ of Scripture, and Scripture itself ; because other-  
 “ wise, as you have managed the matter, I fear,  
 “ Doctor, that not a few of your too easy and be-  
 “ lieving Readers might be in great danger of mista-  
 “ king the one for the other, and of substituting,  
 “ without more ado, your Judgment or Sense of  
 “ Scripture in the place or stead of Scripture itself.”

But, Sir, why is your Eye evil towards your Brethren ? How small a Grain of that Charity, which covers a Multitude of Faults, would have been sufficient to have hid so small a Blemish, had it indeed been one ! Are not you a Protestant ? Are not you a fallible Creature, as well as they ? And yet the Title of your Pamphlet lies open to the very same Reflection. But should any one tell you, that by *the Nature and Consequences of Enthusiasm considered, &c.* I presume, Sir, you mean only your own Judgment or Opinion concerning them ; and then with the like goodly Harangue, rebuke your Arrogance ; would you not even smile at his Pedantry ?

*The Remarker's Reflections upon their Way of Writing, as positive and dogmatical, disproved and retorted.*

The next thing that incurs your Censure, is their peculiar Way of Writing, “ which (it seems) is  
 “ positive and dogmatical, as if they were as cer-  
 “ tain of what they are contending for, as they are  
 “ that the Sun is up at Noon-Day : p 6.” Was this Re-

Reflection true, yet methinks it sounds very oddly, as it comes from your Mouth; and brought to my Mind the Words of our Blessed Saviour, *Why beholdest thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, but considerest not the Beam that is in thine own Eye?* &c. For whatever their Way of Writing may be in itself, sure (thought I) 'twill pass for modest upon the Comparifon.

But to wave this; let me ask you, Is there a lower Degree of Certainty, than what you upbraid 'em with? or is there not? If not, none more positive and dogmatical than yourself; who in pretending to any Certainty (as you do in this very Paragraph, as well as other Places) must claim a Certainty equal to what you charge upon your Brethren; and therefore thou art inexcusable, O Man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself: for thou that judgest dost the same thing. But if there be a lower Degree of Certainty, how does it appear that those Gentlemen assume to themselves that higher Degree any more than you? All they mean by being *certain* (as far as I can learn) is only this, they are well persuaded in their own Minds, they find no reason to be doubtful, &c. It is with another kind of Assurance, or (to use your own Phrase) *immoveable Confidence*, you yourself can talk, when you take upon you to condemn their Doctrine. You speak of it as *utterly repugnant, not only to the Nature and Reason of Things, but to the plain repeated Declarations of God in the Christian Revelation, p. 4. as an implicit contradictory Proposition, which it is impossible for them to prove to be true, p. 42. and so p. 32.*

But not only what your Brethren *have done*, but even what (as you pretend) they have *not done*, is become a Part of your Accusation. The unthinking Reader is made to believe, " They have not once " suppos'd or allow'd, that they may *possibly* be mis-  
" taken



“ taken in this Case ; and therefore that it would not  
 “ be safe for the serious plain Christian *absolutely* to  
 “ depend upon them: *p. 6.*” And you hereupon ex-  
 postulate with those Gentlemen, saying “ Certainly  
 “ such an Acknowledgement, at least once for all,  
 “ had been but open and ingenuous in those, who  
 “ did not pretend to be infallible.” Why, sure,  
 Sir, such as *don’t pretend* to be infallible, do more than  
*suppose* all this. But perhaps your Brethren should  
 have said, that they even suspected the Truth of  
 their own Doctrine, and therefore must desire the  
 Reader to be cautious how he believes it : For as to  
 the *Possibility* of their being mistaken, this they plain-  
 ly allow, nay openly profess ; whilst they so expressly  
 declare, “ That they are far from pretending to an  
 “ infallible Judgment about Gospel-Truth and Er-  
 “ ror ; *p. 5.*” And add in the same Page, “ If none  
 “ must take upon them to instruct, &c. others,  
 “ but those that are themselves infallible, the Mini-  
 “ sterial Office falls to the ground, &c.” One would  
 think, that with any but yourself, this alone might  
 pass as a very frank Acknowledgement, that it  
 would not be safe for any *absolutely* to depend upon  
 them. But your Brethren not contented to do it  
*once for all*, have scattered such Concessions as these  
 throughout their whole Book. It is (in *p. 43.*) laid  
 down as a Principle with them, “ That every Chri-  
 “ stian ought to judge for himself, and to take the  
 “ Holy Scriptures as the *sole* Ground of his Faith  
 “ and Hope : and that all are obliged to study and to  
 “ converse with them, to guide their Consciences by  
 “ them, and not by the Authority or Dictates of a-  
 “ ny mere Men, or Body of Men.” There are o-  
 ther Places to the same purpose. Be pleased to re-  
 view *p. 14, 18, 127.* of their Book, and see whether  
 such Passages are to be found there or not : If  
 they be, then I beseech you, Sir ; nay, (to use your  
 own Words) I conjure you, “ as you are a Minister

“ of the Gospel, in the Name of our great Lord  
 “ and Master, and as you expect to be judged by  
 “ him, let the World know, by what Authority you  
 “ take upon you” thus to traduce your Brethren,  
 and abuse your Reader.

*The Remarker's Attempt, to fix a Claim of Infalli-  
 bility upon his Brethren, weak and disingenuous.*

What hath hitherto pass'd, is only a Prelude to  
 the main Action; I am come at length to your grand  
 Charge. And here you tell your Brethren, “ That  
 “ what you would take notice of, and make some  
 “ Remarks upon, is, that they seem to you directly  
 “ to claim Infallibility in Matters of Faith, only  
 “ have softened it a little by giving it another Name;  
 “ p. 6, 7.” And in p. 9. you add, “ I can't see you  
 “ are inclined to yield an Inch to his Holiness, but  
 “ that in whatever you think fit to declare as a  
 “ necessary Article of Faith, or necessary to Salva-  
 “ tion, you are as infallible as the Pope himself.”

A black Indictment indeed! and what requires  
 more than a slight Proof to make it good. The Wit-  
 nesses, it is to be hoped, are both positive and sub-  
 stantial, upon whose Testimony you have presumed  
 to fix this Mark of the Beast, that Man of Sin, that  
 Son of Perdition, upon your Brethren; and this too  
 in the face of the World. It is to be hoped also,  
 that in the Examination of these Witnesses, you will  
 appear to have acted with the Candour of a Gentle-  
 man, with the Sincerity of a Christian, and the Soli-  
 dity of a Divine; suitable to that excellent Spirit,  
 and Strength of Judgment, which animate every  
 Page of the Introduction, from whence you have  
 drawn this Accusation. To be fair and faithful in  
 representing their Judgment, is but a reasonable Ex-  
 pectation; for (as your Brethren express it). “ those  
 “ that place the Whole of their Religion in Sincerity,  
 “ and expect that this Virtue should make up all  
 “ Defi-

“ Deficiencies in Knowledge and Faith, had need to  
 “ preserve it sound and intire; and most carefully to  
 “ avoid every thing, that may either draw them a-  
 “ way from it, or deprive them of that Comfort  
 “ they may receive from the Evidences of it: be-  
 “ cause (as they further observe) if this also should  
 “ fail them, it behoves them to consider what they  
 “ will have left to support either their Reputation  
 “ with Men, or the Peace of their own Consciences  
 “ in the Sight of God.”

And yet, alas! the utmost Proof after all that you  
 are able to produce, is only one single Sentence, in  
 which an infallibility of Judgment is so far from be-  
 ing directly claimed (as you pretend) that it is ex-  
 pressly disclaimed, and that in as strong Terms as can  
 well be invented. There is not, I may be bold to  
 say, a Syllable to support the Charge, but what by  
 a critical-Inquisition is extorted from it, contrary to  
 the obvious as well as the genuine Sense of the Au-  
 thor. The whole Passage is this: “ We are far from  
 “ pretending to an infallible Judgment about Gospel-  
 “ Truth and Error. But we take it to be an agreed  
 “ Point with Protestants, That there may be Cer-  
 “ tainty where there is not Infallibility; and none  
 “ can deny this, unless they will venture to assert,  
 “ that we can in no case know we are in the Right,  
 “ but by being assured it is impossible for us in any  
 “ case to be in the Wrong: And if none must take  
 “ upon them to instruct, admonish and reprove o-  
 “ thers, that they think are departing from the  
 “ Truth, but those that are themselves infallible,  
 “ the Ministerial Office falls to the ground, and even  
 “ all private Christian Advice falls with it. And  
 “ yet this, we believe, would be to carry the Mat-  
 “ ter farther than those that raise such Objections  
 “ ever intended.”



*The perverted Paragraph (just mentioned) vindicated,  
and the Author's Sense and Reasoning therein cleared.*

“ This, you think, must be allowed to pass for a  
“ very peculiar and remarkable Piece of Reasoning.”  
But whether so peculiar and remarkable as your Animadversions upon it, let the Impartial judge. Such Reasoning, perhaps, when rescued out of the hands of Violence, and set in a just and proper Light, may be found too nervous and conclusive for the most iron-jaw'd Mathematician to tear in pieces. Tho' had it been indeed fallacious, the Consequences are not so dangerous, but a Brother might have passed it by in silence, especially since the Paragraph itself is more than a sufficient Preservative against such Danger. At least it might have been expected, that one who makes the absolute Necessity of being actually in the Right the distinguishing Mark of a Papist, would have treated such an Instance of Fallibility with more Tenderness; and not have exhausted in a manner his Fund of Virulency, Wit and Drollery, in exposing the Mistake to Ridicule and Contempt. But something, I suppose, was thought necessary to be said, to blacken the Introduction, and so to prejudice the Reader against that Part, which was principally designed to remove his Prejudices;  
*p. 14. of the Introduction.*

However, I doubt not but to make it evident, that what you have said upon this Head is no better than a piece of fine-spun Sophistry, or a mere Jingle of Words about Certainty and Infallibility. Only before I examine your Remarks upon that Passage, give me leave first to explain what I take to be the genuine Sense of it.

Your Brethren there claim it as their Right, nay declare it to be their Duty, “ to instruct, admonish  
“ and reprove those that they think are depart-  
“ ing from the Faith.” Now, lest any should maliciously represent this as a sort of assuming to  
D them-

themselves an Infallibility in such Matters, they take occasion utterly to renounce all the least Pretences thereunto: *We are far from pretending to an infallible Judgment about Gospel-Truth and Error.* But then they observe withal, "That if none must take upon them to perform such Duties, but those that are themselves infallible, the Ministerial Office falls to the ground, and all private Christian Advice falls with it." They reckon that a bare Certainty of Knowledge or of Faith (as they call it, p.8.) without Infallibility, is enough to warrant their Admonitions; even such a Degree of Certainty, as an *Acquaintance with the Bible, and a due Regard to the just and necessary Rules of Interpretation*, are sufficient to convey; p.39.

But lest any should captiously reply, That a rational Certainty ever supposes an Infallibility as the Foundation of it; and therefore that by pretending even unto Certainty, an Infallibility in effect is claimed by them: To obviate this Objection, your Brethren declare, "They take it to be an agreed Point with Protestants, that there may be Certainty where there is not Infallibility:" *i. e.* That a Person may be certain he has determined right, without supposing it impossible for him to have determined wrong. "And none (say they) can deny this [*viz.* that there may be Certainty where there is not Infallibility] "unless they will venture to assert, that we can in no case [*i. e.* in none of our Determinations, for instance, about Gospel-Truth and Error] "know we are in the right, but by being assured, it is impossible for us in any case [*i. e.* in any of our Determinations about them] "to be in the wrong."

This their Reasoning is to me both clear and solid, and the Consequence with which they charge the contrary Supposition, as absurd as it is unavoidable.

*The Remarker's first Objection produced ; where he confounds Evidence with Certainty, and the Degrees of Evidence with the Kinds thereof.*

But let us hear your Objections.

The first thing you have to charge this Paragraph with, is a flat Contradiction : " Here (say you) is " Infallibility claimed and disclaimed, asserted and " denied. You [Gentlemen] are far from pretend- " ing to an infallible Judgment about Gospel-Truth " and Error, and you pretend to Knowledge or " Certainty, which is the highest Degree of Evi- " dence that human Understandings are capable of ; " and therefore if you are not infallible, so far as your " Knowledge or Certainty goes, it is impossible you " should ever be infallible at all."

The Chain of your Reasoning, I apprehend to be this. Knowledge or Certainty in general is (to use your own Phrase) the highest Degree of Evidence that human Understandings are capable of ; so that these Gentlemen, in claiming of any Certainty, do claim the highest Degree of Evidence. But Infallibility and Certainty are one and the same thing : therefore to pretend unto Certainty in any case, is all one as to pretend unto Infallibility. And consequently, since these Gentlemen are far from pretending to an infallible Judgment about Gospel-Truth and Error, and yet do pretend unto Certainty ; Infallibility is, in effect, both claimed and disclaimed, asserted and denied by them.

Here the Stress of your Reasoning plainly depends upon two things, which you seem to lay down as *Postulata* ; viz. That nothing is Certainty, but the highest Degree of Evidence, &c. and that Certainty and Infallibility are the same thing. But it is, I doubt not, clearly demonstrable, that these two grand Suppositions are two grand Mistakes ; and therefore that the goodly Fabrick you have built upon them, is all chimerical and imaginary.



To begin with your first Supposition, That nothing is Certainty but the highest Degree of Evidence that human Understandings are capable of. And here I will not dispute with you, whether Knowledge or Certainty be so properly the Evidence itself, as the Effect of such Evidence; yet the Learned distinguish betwixt them, and you yourself do sometimes make the Evidence of a Truth to be not our very Certainty, but the Ground and Cause of it. "Thus (say you) this intuitive and demonstrative Evidence is the sole *Foundation* of Knowledge or Certainty;" *p. 11.* Perhaps you might depend upon the Candour of your Brethren to supply a small Omission, by prefixing themselves some restrictive Epithet, and that they would understand you of a subjective Evidence only. But then, should you not be ready to shew the like Civility, according to the Golden Rule, *Mat. vii. 12.* and so have understood them likewise of a moral Certainty, the very Certainty they are there speaking of?

Neither shall I contend, whether Knowledge or Certainty (according to your own Explication of the Terms) should not have been rather stiled the highest *Kind*, than *Degree* of Evidence: and yet a demonstrative Evidence (which is doubtless of a lower Degree than that which is intuitive) is, yourself being Judge, a sufficient Foundation for Certainty; *p. 11.* But perhaps you admit of Degrees in the highest Degree; or, by the highest Degree of Evidence you mean not indeed the *highest Degree*, but the *highest Kind* only.

Tho, were a Man so disposed, how easy would it be to bear hard upon your own Expressions; which, without some Grains of Allowance, are as little able to stand the Test of Criticism, as your Brethrens? and then gravely to admonish you in your own words, with a little Variation, saying, Tho in a loose and popular Way of speaking Men may confound Evidence with Certainty, and the Degrees of Evidence  
with

with the Kinds thereof; yet in strict Reasoning and Argument, we ought always to distinguish them, or otherwise we must unavoidably confound the Nature and Reason of Things: p. 4.

*The Remarker's first grand Supposition, That nothing is Certainty but the highest Degree of Certainty, shewn to be most absurd and ridiculous.*

But that which I would observe, and can't but wonder at, is this; That nothing should be Certainty with a Man of your Niceness, but the highest Degree of subjective Evidence; or, that you should allow nothing to be Certainty, but the highest Degree of Certainty. An Assertion, contrary not only to Grammar and Philosophy, but to the Language of the Holy Scriptures, and to your own Use of the Word in other parts of your Book.

*Contrary to Grammar.*

This wild Supposition (which indeed seems to be the Cardinal Error, that has misled you in your whole Reasoning) every School-Boy almost hath learnt how to confute. If there be no Degrees in Certainty, I do but think what an unaccountable Blunder it must be in all the Grammarians, who taught us to say, *Certus, Certior, Certissimus*: for according to your Rules of Propriety, it must be as great a Solecism in Speech, to assert of any thing, that it is more certain than another, or most certain; as it would be to say, that a thing is more second, or most second. For, it seems, nothing (at least with your refined Taste) must pass for Certainty, that falls but an hair's breadth short of the highest Degree of Evidence, of which the human Understanding is capable.

And have you indeed such a Degree of Evidence for every thing, of which you declare yourself certain in this Pamphlet? If you have, sure I am, that the Capacity of your Understanding is none of the largest. But if you han't, is it not a little unfair, not

to say assuming, to write as if you had? Nay, if the Evidence itself be of a lower Degree, must not the Certainty you build upon it, be so too? *i. e.* must there not be Degrees in Certainty? unless your Certainty here rises higher than the very Evidence, and so is of the Enthusiastick Strain. But perhaps it is only an uncertain Certainty that you claim in this Case; if so, "you may take it with all my heart, and I wish you much good of it: be as uncertainly certain, as you please."

*Contrary to Philosophy.*

A metaphysical Certainty, I grant, stands upon the highest Evidence. A Proposition thus grounded, will be necessarily true, and the contrary a flat Contradiction. But, good Sir, is there no Certainty, but that which is metaphysical? To be sure, that the Sun is up at Noon-day is proper Certainty, by your own Confession, *p. 6.* And yet it is no more a Contradiction, that there should be a Noon-tide Brightness in the absence of the Sun, than to suppose a Midnight Darkness, when the Sun is present; as in the Day of Pharaoh's Plagues, and at the Crucifixion of our Blessed Lord. Indeed according to the Laws of Nature this is altogether impossible, it cannot be; and therefore there is only a physical Certainty in that Case, (as they stile it) which is proper Certainty, but in a lower degree; in as much as the contrary is not absolutely impossible. It is easy for the God of Nature to change these Laws, and without the help of that Heavenly Luminary to create a glorious Day: witness the solemn Circumstances of Paul's Conversion. *At Mid-day, O King, I saw in the way a Light from Heaven, above the Brightness of the Sun, shining round about me, and them that journeyed with me, &c.*

*Contrary to your own Use of the Word.*

Nay, let but the Reader take you at a time when the Itch of Criticism about this Word is not upon you,



you, and yourself in the humour to speak as the rest of Mankind; and he shall find, that you can easily admit of a Certainty, even less than that which is physical. As in the Passage mentioned already: "I shall not (say you) insist upon your Way of Writing, as if you were *as* certain of what you are contending for, *as* you are that the Sun is up at Noon-Day." A plain Intimation that there may be a Certainty short of this also, *viz.* a moral Certainty, (as the Logicians call it:) Where it is enough, that the Evidence is such, as will not suffer us (reasonably) to doubt; or such as leaves the Mind firmly persuaded, that the thing is true: tho it is far from inclining us to think, that it is impossible, without a Contradiction or a Miracle, that the thing should be otherwise.

*Contrary to Scripture-Language.*

It is with this kind of Certainty that Joseph's Brethren do speak, when they cry to one another, *Joseph will certainly requite us all the Evil that we did unto him*, Gen. l. 15. That of the chief Captain also is of the same kind, *Acts* xxii. 30. *On the morrow, because he would know the Certainty, whereof Paul was accused, he loosed him from his Bands.*

So that when you make nothing to be Knowledge or Certainty, but the highest Degree of subjective Evidence, you do it in flat contradiction to the Sentiments of the Learned, to Scripture-Style, nay to your own Usage in this very Pamphlet, and to Custom itself:

*Quem penes arbitrium est, & Jus, & Norma loquendi.*

But, after all, had nothing been strictly Knowledge or Certainty, but what Metaphysicians do call the highest Degree or Kind thereof; yet since in a popular way of speaking, the Terms (as you yourself acknowledge, p. 11.) have a lower Signification, it is hardly just, much less ingenuous, to father the  
very

very highest Degree upon these Gentlemen, without their leave; even in a Discourse, which was design'd for the Populace or plain Christian only: unless you could shew, that the Reasoning of their Book (which I here defy you to do) had rendred such a rigid Acceptation necessary.

Whereas, alas! this is so far from being the real Case, that the Sense you arbitrarily impose upon their Words, is contrived for no other purpose, but to represent your Brethren as inconsistent and contradictory; or, to prove that Infallibility is claim'd and disclaim'd, asserted and deny'd by them.

But now, since in strict Propriety there are Degrees of Certainty, how come you to tell the World, that by pretending to any Certainty they claim the highest? or, that the Claim of a lower Degree only is inconsistent with a Disclaim of Infallibility, which (with you) is the very highest Degree of subjective Evidence? By what Rule of Interpretation, or (to speak in your own Dialect) "by what Force of Magick you have drawn this Consequence, you have not inform'd us, and perhaps 'tis a Mystery which you cannot, and therefore in Prudence will not explain; or possibly it might not consist with your design'd Brevity, and so you have reserved it for your next." So much for your first Supposition, That nothing is Certainty but the highest Degree thereof.

*The Remarker's second grand Supposition, That Certainty and Infallibility are the same thing, considered.*

The other is as wonderful, viz. That Certainty and Infallibility are the same thing. Your Words are these: *If you [Gentlemen] are not infallible, so far as your Knowledge or Certainty goes, it is impossible you should ever be infallible at all; p. 7.* And to the same purpose in the next Page: *I think it is evident, that Infallibility must go as far as Certainty, and that no Man can be certain of any thing, of which he is not infallibly cer-*  
tain;

tain; p. 8. And this you lay down in both places, in opposition to your Brethren, who hold, "That there may be Certainty, where there is not Infallibility."

So that no less can be made of what you assert than this, That Knowledge or Certainty is Infallibility itself. Whereas I am not without hopes of convincing you, they are so far from being the very same thing, that they do not always go together, but are sometimes found separated in created Beings. To make this appear, it won't be improper to fix in our Minds, by the help of a few Distinctions, a clear Idea of what is meant by Certainty and Infallibility.

*The Distinction betwixt an Objective and a Subjective Certainty, and betwixt a Rational and an Enthusiastick Certainty, explained.*

There is an Objective, and there is a Subjective Certainty. The former is no other than the real Truth or Importance of a thing, considered abstractedly in itself: the latter is the firm Persuasion that we have in our Minds concerning its Truth or Importance. And to this purpose T.G. in his *Ars Sciendi* explains the Term, p. 162. Now the Certainty of which those Gentlemen speak, is Subjective only; (vid. p. 9. of their *Introduct.*) which supposes that the Judgment be actually form'd, and an indubitable Persuasion that the Judgment we have form'd is true; or (in their own words) *the knowing we are in the right.*

If the Evidence upon which this Persuasion stands, is really sufficient to extinguish Doubt, or to support that Degree of firm Persuasion we build upon it, it is a *rational Certainty*; if not, the Certainty we claim is so far of an *Enthusiastick Kind*. This last is as much exploded by your Brethren as by yourself; and therefore to charge them (without the least Shadow of Proof) with *immoveable Confidence*, or an *invincible Adherence to things beyond their just Degree of rational*



*objective Evidence, which you not only tell them is the last Refuge of all Bigotry and Enthusiasm, but they themselves hold as fast as their Integrity, and will not let it go, p. 10. is downright Slander and Defamation.*

*The Idea of an infallible Certainty fix'd; and an Inquiry whether all rational Certainty must needs be infallible.*

Again, a Subjective Certainty is either fallible or infallible. An infallible Certainty is such a Certainty as is founded upon an infallible Evidence, upon an Evidence that cannot deceive, or that is absolutely impossible to be false. Thus, for instance, It is impossible for God to lye, It is impossible that a Thing should *be* and *not be* at one and the same time, &c. are Truths of which I am infallibly certain. A fallible Certainty is such a Certainty as is grounded upon an Evidence that will not suffer us to doubt; and yet 'tis possible notwithstanding, that the thing (without a Contradiction) may be otherwise. Thus you are certain that the Sun is up at Noon-day, and yet it is only with a fallible Certainty: For (as has been observ'd) there may be a Meridian Light without the Sun. So, another is morally certain, that *Lewis XIV. of France* and *Anne of Great Britain* are dead: He has no doubt in his Mind, has no reason, no room to be doubtful concerning the Truth of such things; 'tis therefore a rational Certainty: And yet without a Contradiction, or a Miracle either, they may both be possibly alive, may be now sitting upon their Thrones, and swaying their Scepters over their respective Realms notwithstanding. In these and such-like Instances, the Evidence is but fallible, and by consequence the Certainty that stands upon it, must be fallible too.

And indeed an infallible Certainty (the thing you so much contend for) naturally supposes that there is a Certainty that is not infallible, (as great a Jest as you seem to make of it;) unless *infallible*, when apply'd to Certainty, stands for a mere Cypher, and signifies

signifies just nothing. So that let the World judge, what reason you had to be so unmercifully satirical upon your Brethren, only for supposing that there may be Certainty, where there is not Infallibility; and whether there be any thing of Truth (whatever there may be of a Punster's Wit) in that pretty Jingle with which you have (I doubt not) tickled your own Fancy, and the Ears too of many an unwary Reader; "That if it be only a fallible or uncertain Certainty that they claim in this Case, &c. they may be as fallibly infallible, or as uncertainly certain as they please:" Or, whether the concluding Droll hath any thing of a Divine or a Gentleman in it; "This is a Privilege (say you) which tho it may not perhaps expose them to much Envy, yet you cannot engage for it, it will not expose them to some Ridicule." As if, Sir, it was such a Mortification to be the Ridicule of the Ignorant: Tho it is to be hoped, there are not many such *solid Orbs of Skull*, but what can easily see through this thred-bare Sophistry.

*The Difference betwixt a fallible Certainty, and an uncertain Certainty, stated.*

For, pray Sir, (to reason the Case a little with you) is there no Distinction to be made betwixt a fallible Certainty, and an uncertain Certainty? *i.e.* betwixt a not doubting in our Minds, tho upon an Evidence that may possibly deceive; and a doubting even of what we do not doubt? The former, sure, is not quite so flat a Contradiction as the latter: The one is to be *certain*, and yet *not certain*; the other is only to be fallible about what we have no reason to be doubtful, and concerning which we have therefore reason to be certain.

But it seems, to be fallible, and to be uncertain, are, as you make them chime, Terms of the same signification; and consequently, to be at the greatest Uncertainty, and to be at the greatest Fallibility;

or, to be uncertain what one shall do, and to be fallible what one shall do; must in your critical Ear be the same thing: tho to others, the Difference betwixt them is as great as betwixt Sense and Non-sense.

According to your Way of Punning, the grossest Blunders and Improprieties of Speech would be strictly accurate. Thus, when you tell your Brethren, "That as Protestants, or even as fallible Creatures, they can mean nothing else, &c." you might (if you had so pleased) have said, It is *infallible*, that as Protestants, or even as *fallible* Creatures; and it is *certain* as Protestants, or even as *uncertain* Creatures, you must mean so, or so. So that upon the whole, you may do well to consider, whether with judicious Persons you have exposed those Gentlemen, or yourself, most to Ridicule. Thus,

*Wit's an unruly Engine, wildly striking  
Sometimes a Friend, sometimes the Engineer.  
Hast thou the knack? pamper it not with liking:  
But if thou want it, buy it not too dear.*

Herbert.

As there may be a rational Certainty, where there is not an infallible Certainty; so it is (I doubt not) easy to prove, that there may be an infallible Certainty, and much more a lower Degree of Certainty, without an Infallibility of Judgment: Tho it is (I find) with you no better than a Contradiction or Absurdity to suppose it; for "you cannot, it seems, conceive how God himself should make a Man more infallible in his Judgment in any Case, than by imparting to him the certain Knowledge of the Thing; it being (you think) impossible, that the human Understanding should be more infallible than Knowledge or Certainty can render it."



*The Notion of an infallible Judgment explained.*

Not to contend about mere Words, give me leave to explain a little what I take to be your Brethrens Sense of an infallible Judgment, when they declare they are far from pretending to such a Judgment about Gospel-Truth and Error.

By the Judgment here I suppose them to understand the determining Faculty itself, and not any particular Determination of this Faculty ; or (if you will) the very Power that judges, and not any particular Judgments that are form'd by this Power. And the Judgment is then *infallible*, when it cannot be deceived, or when it is impossible for it to determine wrong. It matters not, in the Case before us, whether this Infallibility be natural or acquired ; whether it arises from the intrinsic Perfection of the Faculty, which cannot but see things as they are, and determine accordingly ; or from the over-powering Brightness of that objective or extrinsic Evidence, which is sure to attend it, and to secure it against Mistakes in all its Determinations : it matters not, whether this Infallibility be absolute and unlimited, such as extends to every thing ; or whether it be restrain'd unto some particular Objects only : whether it be a constant and an abiding Quality, such as is never separated from the Judgment ; or whether it be occasional and transient, enjoy'd at some certain Seasons only, and for some extraordinary Purposes. Yet still so far, and so long as the Judgment is infallible, it can't possibly, in such Things, and for that Time, be deceived.

*Whether an infallible Certainty and an infallible Judgment are exactly the same thing ?*

The Notion of an infallible Judgment being stated, it can't, I think, but be obvious to every one, that there may be an infallible Certainty, and much more a lower Degree of Certainty, where the Judgment

ment (or Faculty) itself is not infallible. However, to make it appear yet plainer, I shall presume so far upon the Candour and Patience of the Reader, as to shew, That an infallible Certainty, and an infallible Judgment, are neither exactly the same thing, nor indeed are they necessarily found together in the same Subject; hoping that if I be thought a little dry and tedious here, the Blame will be laid at his door, whose Conduct hath made it necessary.

*First*, An infallible Judgment and an infallible Certainty are not the same thing: They differ both with respect to the Judgment and Certainty, which are said to be infallible; and also with respect to the Infallibility ascribed unto each of them.

*They differ with respect unto the Judgment and Certainty, which are said to be infallible.*

Were Judgment and Certainty synonymous Terms, then a Man of a *weak Judgment*, and a Man of a *weak Certainty*, would be the same thing; a *fallible Judgment* and a *fallible Certainty* would be Phrases of a like Import and Propriety: then an *uncertain* (or a doubtful) Judgment would be as great a Contradiction as an *uncertain Certainty*. Nay, as *Infallibility* (with you) *must go as far as our Certainty*, so *Infallibility* for the same reason must go as far as our Judgments also: barely to mention which things, is enough to expose their Absurdity. But indeed the Judgment is the Power itself, considered abstractedly from any of its Acts; it is a Capacity to determine, which we have antecedent to any of its Determinations, and much more to any Reflections of the Mind upon the Determinations we have made, and (above all) to any indubitable Persuasion that such Determinations are right.

Whereas a Subjective Certainty does not only infer a Power to judge, but also the Exercise of this Power; it supposes a Determination to be made: nay, the bare forming of a Judgment is not enough  
for

for Certainty, unless we do review the Judgment we have formed, and are firmly persuaded too, that the Judgment we have formed is right: for if there remains a Doubt upon our Minds, whether the Determination be right or wrong, it is not Certainty, but Uncertainty. Now since Certainty and Judgment are such very different things, how can an infallible Judgment, and an infallible Certainty, be altogether the same thing? And yet not only an infallible Judgment and an infallible Certainty, but an infallible Judgment and any Certainty, are equipollent in your Phraseology: "And you (it seems) are *sure* (I suppose, you mean certain and infallible) that all the natural necessary Consequences of either, are *exactly* the same." p. 10.

Again, as Judgment and Certainty do differ between themselves, so also with respect to the Infallibility that is attributed to each of them. Our Certainty is said to be infallible, because of the Evidence proposed to the Understanding, which (in this case) is such as cannot possibly *deceive*. But our Judgments are stiled infallible with regard to the Power that is to determine about the proposed Evidence, and because the Power is such as cannot (in this case) possibly *be deceived*. So that there is as great a Difference between the Infallibility of the Judgment, and the Infallibility ascribed to Certainty, as there is between a subjective and an objective Infallibility, or between an infallible Power and an infallible Evidence; and as there is betwixt an Infallibility that cannot *be* deceived, and an Infallibility that cannot deceive. So that to retort with some little Alteration another of your pert Reflections, "Whether you will frankly own it or no, yet you make it undeniably evident, you understand but very little of the true Signification and Propriety of Words; whatever you do of the Nature and Reason of Things; but then whatever you want in Understanding, you abundantly make up in Presuming." p. 21.

Whether



*Whether an infallible Certainty and an infallible Judgment are necessarily found together in the same Subject?*

Having demonstrated that an infallible Judgment and an infallible Certainty are far from being the same; I shall shew,

*Secondly*, That they are not necessarily found together in the same Subject neither. For there may both be an infallible Judgment without an infallible Certainty, and an infallible Certainty without an infallible Judgment.

First, There may be an infallible Judgment without *any* Certainty, and much more without an infallible Certainty; the Judgment (in the case before us) being nothing but a Power to judge or determine: as a Person may have the Power, whether it be exercised or not, so this determining Power may be infallible, whether it be exercised or no. But a Person cannot be certain, and therefore not infallibly certain, without a previous Determination of this Power, and a Reflection upon such Determination: So that the Judgment, or the Power of judging, may be infallible, and yet the Person neither certain nor uncertain for want of an Exercise of that Power, and a Reflection upon the Exercise thereof. Nay, as it is possible in the nature of things to have an infallible Judgment, and yet not to be conscious of its Infallibility; so (for ought I can see) it is also possible that a Person (for want of such Consciousness) may be uncertain, whether the Determinations of this infallible Power be right or wrong.

Again, there may be an infallible Certainty, and much more a Certainty of a lower degree, without an infallible Judgment. As often as any particular demonstrative Evidence that attends a Mathematical Proposition, is so clearly discerned, as not to suffer us to doubt of the Truth of it, we have an infallible Certainty; yet the Judgment (or Faculty) itself, all  
this

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this while may be fallible in its Determinations about such Objects; i. e. it may be possible for it to determine wrong about them: unless it could be proved that the like infallible Evidence shall again present itself to the Mind, and that the Mind shall attend unto it, may be prepared to admit the Evidence to such a degree, as to secure it against a possible Mistake in its Determinations relating thereunto. For upon the Failure of any one, and much more of all these (which yet may fail us, notwithstanding any kind of past or present Certainty about such Objects) there may be, after all, an infallible Certainty without an infallible Judgment.

*The Remarker's second Objection produced and examined.*

And so much in answer to your first Objection, against the fore-cited Paragraph of your Brethrens *Introduction*. The next thing you have to charge it with, is a false Supposition: "Here (say you) is a general Principle laid down, a Point which all Protestants are supposed to be agreed in, that there may be Certainty where there is not Infallibility; but this (add you) being to my Understanding a plain Contradiction, I shall never believe that all Protestants are agreed in it, till I have better Authority for it." p. 7.

Sir, those Gentlemen are not answerable for your Understanding; nor is the World yet agreed to make it the Standard of Truth and Error. What to you is a plain Contradiction, to another perhaps may be as plain a Truth: 'Tis so in the present Case. Nay, since I have proved from your own Concessions, that there are Degrees in Certainty, and that nothing with you is Infallibility but the highest Degree; you must either allow there may be Certainty where there is not Infallibility, or hold a Contradiction yourself; i. e. you must either grant their Principle to be true, or maintain both that there *are*, and that there *are not* Degrees in Certainty.

But be this as it will; Is nothing an agreed Point with Protestants (for those are your Brethrens Words) but what *all* Protestants are agreed in? If so, it is, I'll assure you, but a coarse Compliment you have bestowed upon the Protestant World, when you tell us, "That the Necessity of believing what *appears* " to be not only *wholly* unintelligible, but *contradictory* " also, is still a Principle amongst Protestants;" p. 15. *i. e.* it is an agreed Point with Protestants, or what *all* Protestants are agreed in. But pray, Sir, who are those Protestants, that hold the Necessity of believing what appears [even to themselves] wholly unintelligible and contradictory? that hold this as a Principle too? Be open and ingenuous (it is a piece of Justice you owe to the Innocent) that the World may know who are guilty, and who are not. Do you mean the Church of *England* in particular, because of the first of your Thirty-nine Articles? Or do you take in also Protestant Dissenters of every Denomination, who fall in with the sixth Answer of the Assembly's Catechism? Or don't you comprehend too the Reformed Churches abroad, in whose Confessions there is a Harmony with ours, in this grand Article of the Christian Faith? Or rather, is it not the whole Christian World you would be thought to strike at, save a few *Socinians*, *Arians*, and some others, you best know who, amongst whom you chuse to rank yourself?

But, Sir, what is the better Authority you would have, before you shall believe it to be an agreed Point with Protestants, That there may be Certainty where there is not Infallibility? Did you expect to have seen in Epitome a Collection of what the Learned amongst Protestants, in every Country and Age, have said in Defence of this Distinction? Or should they have referred you to a long List of Names, where every Individual had subscribed this Point? It is your part to produce Authorities that vouch the contrary, *viz.* That Certainty and Infallibility are the



the same thing. Till then, the Testimony of four aged Divines (it is to be hoped) may be sufficient to weigh down the single Authority of such a Novice as you or I.

But to pass on, you tell us, "The whole World is agreed, that there may be Certainty, strict infallible Certainty in Matters of Science; but they must be very weak Protestants, if there be any such, who talk of Certainty in Matters of Faith."

p. 7.

That there may be Certainty upon an infallible Evidence in Matters of Science, I readily grant you. But since there once were Scepticks in Philosophy as well as Religion, such as doubted of every thing, I very much question, whether *the whole World* be agreed in this Point; unless you could assure me, that Race of Seekers is now extinct.

Tho (by the way) if it be a plain Contradiction for any to be certain, but those that are *themselves* infallible (which you seem to assert, or assert nothing to your purpose) one would think that a fallible Creature can be certain in nothing; no, not in Matters of Science itself: And therefore that you must either renounce all Certainty in such Matters, or pretend to be infallible therein.

And yet should you pretend to the latter, and so disclaim Infallibility in this Sense only, Infallibility in every thing, or an Impossibility of erring in any case at all; might I not turn your own Words upon you, and say, "The Pope and Church of Rome never pretended to an [universal] Infallibility; nay, the Apostles themselves were not infallible in this Sense, they were not infallible in every thing, or above a Possibility of Error in all cases whatever?" And then, with a like scornful Air, conclude, "Thus you have in great Humility and Condescension given up the Claim of a Divine Attribute, and vouchsafed to divest yourself

“ of the Infallibility of God ; but you stand hard by  
 “ the Infallibility of the Pope, &c.” p. 8, 9, 10.

*The Remarker proved upon his own Principles to be  
 a Papist, or at least a weak Protestant.*

But to close this Head, “ If they must be weak,  
 “ very weak Protestants, if there are any such, who  
 “ talk of Certainty in Matters of Faith ;” must not  
 yourself be one of these Weaklings, or renounce your  
 Protestantism ? For, in case our Faith may be as  
 certain, as the Reason that supports it, then we may  
 be certain in such Matters also, by your own Confes-  
 sion. For according to you, (p. 16. treating of the  
 Nature of Faith) “ the Assent of the Understanding  
 “ proceeds upon certain and probable Reasons, Di-  
 “ vine or Human Testimony, &c.” A plain Intima-  
 tion that a *Divine* Testimony is a *certain* Foundation  
 for Faith. And in this you agree not only with your  
 Brethren, but with great *Chillingworth* himself, who  
 (as they take notice, p. 128.) has well observed  
 “ No Demonstration can be stronger than this, God  
 “ hath said so, and therefore it must be true.” Now  
 where the Evidence is certain, why mayn’t the  
 Strength of our Persuasion be proportionable, and  
 certain too ?

But here you’ll turn upon me, and say, “ We  
 “ can’t be certain of any thing at all, if we are not  
 “ infallibly certain ;” p. 8. Tho I have shewn this to  
 be a grand Mistake, yet to suppose for once, that  
 Certainty, at least upon a Divine Testimony, is an  
 infallible Certainty, the Evidence in this case being  
 infallible ; what would you infer ? Why, “ if we  
 “ pretend to infallible Certainty in Matters of Faith,  
 “ you hope we will not disclaim Infallibility in those  
 “ Matters ;” p. 8. It would be very odd indeed, to  
 pretend we are certain upon an infallible Evidence,  
 and yet deny that the Evidence is infallible. But I  
 hope you can make a Distinction betwixt owning the  
 Evidence to be infallible, such as cannot itself de-  
 ceive ;

ceive; and pretending that our Judgments are infallible, or such as cannot be deceived in their Determinations about this Evidence. And yet this Distinction, rightly applied, takes off the Varnish, and shews the Nakedness of that Sophistry, by which you have endeavour'd to make your Brethren a Jest unto the World.

*The Remarker's third Objection considered.*

But to say something to your third and last Objection, against that innocent, but tortured Paragraph of your Brethren. And here you represent them, as defending one Contradiction with another. Your Words are these: "And, which is stranger still, if possible, it is said that none can deny this Contradiction, That there may be Certainty where there is not Infallibility, unless they will assert (another Contradiction) that Men cannot be certain or infallible in some Cases, without being so in all; or that no Man can be infallible in any Case, without being absolutely and in all Cases beyond the Possibility of Error."

But, Sir, why have we not here your Brethrens Sense in their own words? Is it because they were not clear enough to convey their Meaning? Or is it not rather, because without this Variation they would not have spoke out the Contradiction you was resolved to fix upon them? Your Exposition, 'tis true, is contradictory enough of all reason; but this being the fault of the Expositor only, those Gentlemen are not answerable for the Absurdity.

Besides, who gave you Authority to tell the World, That to be *certain* and to be *infallible*, are with your Brethren synonymous Phrases? whenas the very Business of the Paragraph you refer to, is to shew a Distinction betwixt them, even as great a Distinction as there is betwixt saying, *We know we are in the right*, and saying, *'Tis impossible for us to be in the wrong*; p. 5. Thus to force a Meaning upon their Words;



Words, contrary to the plain professed Intendment of them, is very unaccountable ; and the more so, because the whole World, (I dare say) yourself excepted, do agree with your Brethren in putting a different Sense upon 'em.

*The Remarker's Injustice, in making his Brethren to say, " Men cannot be infallible in some Cases, without being so in all ; and that none can be infallible, without being absolutely beyond the Possibility of Error."*

'Tis as arbitrary and injurious to make them say, " Men can't be infallible in *some* Cases, without being so in *all*." I durst appeal to your own Conscience, whether you indeed believe, that this was their real Meaning. What ! That a Man can't be certain in *any* thing, without being certain in *every* thing ! It is plain to a Demonstration, that nothing was farther from their Thoughts. Sure, Sir, it had been much more laudable, first to have given us their avowed and genuine Sense, and then to have try'd your Skill in Criticism, either as to the Propriety of their Expressions, or as to the Force of their Argument. But thus (again and again) to palm upon your Brethren a Sense they expressly disavow, and then to make 'em accountable for all the Absurdities you can draw from it, is both disingenuous and mean.

Again, what Warrant have you to declare it as your Brethrens Opinion, " That none can be infallible, but those who are *absolutely* beyond the Possibility of Error ?" If a Person be beyond the Possibility of Error, it is enough, he is infallible with them, (*p. 5.*) whether he be *absolutely* beyond it or no. But, as to be certain at all, is (in your account) to be absolutely certain, (*p. 10.*) so (it would seem) to be beyond the Possibility of Error, and to be absolutely beyond it, is to you the same thing also. To such superlative Gentlemen as yourself,

self, nothing (perhaps) must be this or that, but what is the highest degree or kind thereof.

Should you reply, That your Design was not to represent your Brethren as making none to be infallible, but those for whom it is absolutely or simply impossible to err: you did not suppose, that nothing was Infallibility with them, but the highest Degree of Infallibility; no, no: By being *absolutely*, and being *in all Cases* beyond the Possibility of Error, you meant but the same thing, the one being explanatory of the other. Be it so; but then will you lay your Hand upon your Heart, and say, you believe it to be their real Opinion, That no Man can be infallible in some things, without being so in *every* thing whatever? Don't they plainly allow, that a Man's Judgment may be truly infallible, should this Infallibility extend no farther than to Gospel-Truth and Error? tho' indeed they themselves are far from pretending to such a Judgment. Is this doing as you would be done by? For instance, (to fight you with your own Weapons) when you speak of an *absolute* Certainty, p. 9. should I make you to understand by it a Certainty *in all Cases*: and so when you affirm, "That in many Instances the Apostles themselves were plainly left to act upon the common Principles of human Prudence, and the Appearances of Probability only, without that *absolute* Certainty or Infallibility, which they had in other Cases, &c." Should one (I say) represent you, as affirming, That the Apostles were left to act in *many* Cases, without that Certainty in *all* Cases, which they had in *other* Cases; would you think it candid and generous? And yet this is but to take the Term *absolute* in the very sense you yourself had explained it in the Page before. However, rather than charge such a flat Contradiction upon you, I think it but a piece of Justice to suppose, That by an *absolute* Certainty here you understand, not a Certainty in all Cases, but a Certainty of the highest kind only.

Whether

*Whether the Remarker does not, by attributing an absolute Infallibility to the Apostles, vest them in the Infallibility of God.*

But then whilst you ascribe an *absolute* Certainty unto the Apostles, don't you in effect make them to be absolutely infallible too? If this be not your real Opinion, it seems at least to be the necessary Consequence of it. For Infallibility (you say) must go as far as Certainty, p. 8. One would think then, that an absolute Infallibility must go as far as an absolute Certainty; and consequently the Apostles, if they be absolutely certain, must (according to your Dialect) be absolutely infallible too. Or, should you be so hardy as to deny this Consequence, and assert, That there may be an absolute Certainty without an absolute Infallibility; I would then demand, Why may there not be a real Certainty, where there is not a real Infallibility? the very thing you so ridicule in your Brethren. Or, should you say, That all Certainty is absolute; therefore the Person who is certain at all, must be absolutely certain, and so infallible: then let me ask, Since Certainty and Infallibility are with you the same thing, why is not all Infallibility absolute also? and so they who are infallible at all, absolutely infallible? And yet should you ascribe an absolute Infallibility unto Creatures, would you not even exceed what you charge upon your Brethren? and instead of giving up, assume for the Apostles the Claim of a Divine Attribute, and vest them, in the strictest sense, with the Infallibility of God, whose Prerogative alone it is to be absolutely infallible.

*The Remarker's Quibble upon the Ambiguity of the Phrase [in any Case] animadverted upon; and his Brethrens Words rescued from the false Gloss grounded on it.*

Once more, when your Brethren say, "We are far from pretending to an infallible Judgment about  
" Gospel-



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" Gospel-Truth and Error; but we take it to be an  
 " agreed Point with Protestants, that there may be  
 " Certainty, where there is not Infallibility: " And  
 " add, " None can deny this, unless they will venture  
 " to assert, that we can in no case know we are in  
 " the right, but by being assured, that it is im-  
 " possible for us *in any case* to be in the wrong. "  
 Here you quibble upon the Ambiguity of the Phrase  
*in any case*, and wrest it unto a Sense very different  
 from what they designed. You would have it to re-  
 late unto a Diversity of Objects; as if they had dis-  
 claim'd no Infallibility, but *an universal unlimited In-*  
*fallibility in every thing*, p. 9. whereas they are speak-  
 ing of the several Determinations of the Judgment  
 about the same Object. They can easily suppose,  
 that an Apostle (for instance) may be infallible about  
 some sort of things, *viz.* about Gospel-Truth and  
 Error; and yet be liable to Mistakes about other kind  
 of things, *viz.* about the Distance, Magnitude, Mo-  
 tion, Influences, &c. of the Stars. But their plain  
 and obvious Sense, I take to be this: If it be impos-  
 sible to be certain, *viz.* about the proper Godhead  
 of our Saviour, without pretending to an infallible  
 Judgment about Gospel-Truth and Error; or, with-  
 out pretending to a Judgment that cannot err in its  
 Determinations about these Matters: then it will  
 follow, that we can in no Determinations about such  
 Objects know we are in the right, but by being  
 assured it is impossible for us in any of our Determi-  
 nations relating thereunto, to be in the wrong. " Yet  
 " this they believe would be to carry the Matter fur-  
 " ther than those that raise such Objections ever in-  
 " tended. " For, I presume, this last-recited Clause  
 refers to the whole Paragraph.

*His Brethrens Sense and Reasoning illustrated.*

And were we to try their Reasoning in a more fa-  
 miliar Instance, you yourself, I'm persuaded, would  
 allow it to be both clear and conclusive. A Person  
 with

[ 42 ]  
with his Bow shoots an Arrow, and hits the Mark. I've hit the Mark, says he; I'm certain I've hit the Mark. Hold, cries a Stander-by, you certain! Are you an infallible Archer? No, says the Marks-man, I'm far from pretending to be an infallible Archer. But I take it to be an agreed Point with Mankind, that there may be Certainty where there is not Infallibility; i. e. that a Person may know he has now hit the Mark, without supposing it impossible for him to have miss'd it. And none (adds he) can deny this, unless they will venture to assert, that we can in no Case, or Instance, know we have shot right; but by being assured, that it is impossible for us, in any Case or Instance, to have shot wrong; for this plain Reason, Because an infallible Marks-man (so long as he is infallible) is one that cannot at any time miss the Mark which he aims at.

Ah, Sir, is this to act agreeable unto the Genius and Spirit of Christianity, you so much talk of? Are these the only Fruits of that generous Education, *you see reason every day more and more to bless God for?* p. 43. It is utterly below a Man of your Capacity to stoop your Understanding unto so mean an Employment, as to rack your Invention for Tricks and Devices to perplex the Sense of your Brethren, only for a Pre-text to abuse them.

Nay, which still aggravates your Fault, the very Reasoning here, you so much expose, is (or I'm greatly mistaken) really your own, only in other words. For when you tell them, "Indeed were  
" Men infallible in their Judgments, and known to  
" be so, there would be no need to distinguish be-  
" twixt their Sense of Scripture [*i. e.* their Deter-  
" minations about the Sense of it] " and Scripture it-  
" self; because their Sense in that case would neces-  
" sarily be the true Sense:" I would beg leave to ask, Why must their Sense in that case be necessarily the true Sense, if not for this reason, Because all the Determinations of an infallible Judgment must be infal-

infallible? or, in the words of your Brethren, because we are assured, that it is impossible [for such a Judgment] in any Case [or in any of its Determinations about the Sense of Scripture] to be in the wrong?

Having sufficiently clear'd those Gentlemen from the Imputation of Self-contradiction and Falshood, with which you had charg'd the fifth Page of their Introduction; I shall take the liberty to leave with you a Contradiction or two of your own.

*Three Self-contradictions left with the Remarkers, to be reconciled at his leisure.*

1. The Possibility of communicating a Divine Perfection from Eternity, and in an infinite Degree, is what you both assert and deny. 'Tis asserted p. 32. where you tell your Brethren, "It neither hath nor can be proved, that every Perfection which is communicable at all in *any Degree*, is not actually communicable from *all Eternity*, in an *infinite Degree*, &c." 'Tis deny'd p. 10. For Infallibility is a Perfection which (by your own Confession) was communicated in *some Degree* unto the Apostles; and yet you affirm, "That an universal unlimited Infallibility in every thing, is what never was, nor can possibly be communicated to Men, but is peculiar to God alone."

2. The Necessity of being actually in the right, is a Point you assert and deny both. 'Tis deny'd p. 44. "For my own part, say you, I long for that time, which I hope is not far off, when *Sincerity* on the one hand, and the absolute Necessity of being actually in the right on the other, shall remain as the only distinguishing Principles of Papists and Protestants." i. e. You believe, that all which the Gospel makes indispensibly necessary to Salvation, is to be sincere only, whether we be actually in the right in any *one* thing or no. (vid. p. 8. of this Book.)

'Tis asserted p. 9. where you say, "The Apostles were *infallible* in whatever they delivered as the Mind and Will of God, concerning Mens Duty, and the  
" Way



"Way and Means of Salvation." Then, Sir, I am  
Sincerity, but such Duties and Truths which the Apo-  
stles have made indispensibly necessary to Salvation,  
must be infallibly necessary to Salvation, tho a Person  
should in the Integrity of his Heart think otherwise:  
And therefore there must be (upon your own Prin-  
ciples) an indispensable Necessity of being actually in the  
right in such things. (vid. p. 13, & 43 of the Remarks.)

3. Certainty in Matters of Faith is also what you  
both assert and deny. It is deny'd p. 7. "They must  
"be very weak Protestants (you say) if there be any  
"such, who talk of Certainty in Matters of Faith."  
'Tis asserted p. 9. The Infallibility of the Apostles is a  
Matter of Faith; and yet you, tho a Protestant, pre-  
tend unto Certainty about it. "They were doubtless  
"(i.e. certainly) infallible in whatever they delivered  
"as the Mind and Will of God, &c."

So that were your Reasoning solid and conclusive,  
how easily might one play your own Artillery upon  
you, and with double Execution retort your Sarcasms,  
saying, "You cannot be certain of any thing at all, if  
"you are not infallibly certain of it. And if you  
"pretend to infallible Certainty in Matters of Faith  
"Opinion, I hope you will not disclaim Infallibility  
"in those Matters. But if it is only a fallible or un-  
"certain Certainty, that you claim in this Case, you  
"may take it with all my heart; I wish you much  
"good of it: Be as fallibly infallible, and as uncer-  
"tainly certain as you please. This is a Privilege  
"which tho it may not perhaps expose you to much  
"Envy, yet I cannot engage for it, that it will not  
"expose you to some Ridicule."

Thus I have finished the first Part of my Anima-  
versions; and considering the Specimen you have given  
the World by your own Remarks, how little you affe-  
Compliment and Ceremony, you can't, I presume,  
offended with the Freedom and Plain-dealing of,

Sir, Your Friend and Servant,

S. F.

F I N I S.

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